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Career aspirations and background of students opting for fashion education courses in India

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Abstract

Fashion education is one of the fast growing and prosperous vocational education streams across the world. It has rapidly expanded during the last two decades; the courses offered in fashion education are predominantly related to Apparel, Home Furnishing, Accessory and Communication fields which are diffused into the domains of Design, Technology, and Management. The scope, prospects and employment opportunities are enormous as the fashion industry has spread across many other fields. The students undergoing interdisciplinary vocational programs in fashion and allied subjects are required to develop an open mindset and balanced personality for effective learning in order to face the challenges in the dynamic real life fashion environment. For the continuous and overall development of the student in education, his present status, domain acquaintance, perceptions and aspirations play important roles. This study has been mainly conducted to understand students in the perspective of these aspects. Primary data through a well-designed questionnaire had been collected from over 180 students of 2013-14 batch who have taken admission into various fashion related courses (under and post-graduation) at National Institute of Fashion Technology, Hyderabad Center, India. The collected data has been compiled, analyzed and presented through descriptive statistics. The current research involved the analysis of data pertaining to Fashion Design, Technology and Fashion Management students both at UG and PG courses respectively. The findings of the study are useful in understanding the background of the students, their awareness on fashion education, source of information, preferences of careers and life aspirations. The findings of this study can help in refining the curriculum and the overall fashion education process.

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1. Introduction

In any higher education process, for the continuous all-round development of student, the correct choice of course and effective learning during the program are very important and mainly depends on student's interest, domain

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acquaintance, perceptions and aspirations. Career choice has become a complex task with the advent of information technology, the emergence of post industrial revolution with different fields and variety of jobs. According to Kerka (2000) career choice is influenced by multiple factors including personality, interests, self-concept, cultural identity, globalization, socialization, role model, parental grooming, social support and available resources such as information and financial strengths. Once the students join the chosen course, the college is mainly responsible to understand the aforesaid factors and accommodate required learning for students to meet their aspirations. According to Salami (1999) many students made wrong choices in their career because of ignorance, inexperience, peer pressure, advice from friends, parents and teachers, or tags attached with certain job types without adequate knowledge. As reported by Weber (2012), colleges across the U.S. are placing greater emphasis on job preparation and career development. According to (Yadav, 2014) now a days it is the children who decide about his/her career and the college in which he or she will pursue study, only small percentage of students are able to choose right career because they consult their parents, teachers and elder members of their family. Many researchers have studied in conventional higher education and found different parameters which influence career choice and curriculum deliverance and their influence however there were not many noteworthy studies found on fashion education and on how students recognize these courses from a career standpoint, what their backgrounds are, their intentions and aspirations. Therefore the present study has been undertaken and it is limited to students of Undergraduate Fashion Design (UGD); Fashion Design (FD), Textile Design (TD), Accessory Design (AD), Fashion Communication (FC), Knitwear Design (KD) and Undergraduate Fashion Technology (UGT) and Postgraduate Fashion Management(PGM) at National Institute of Fashion Technology (NIFT) Hyderabad, India.

2. Methodology

A questionnaire was developed with thirteen questions on demographic parameters of students and forty one questions pertaining to aspirations, perceptions, domain awareness and background status of students. Students responded to the questionnaire (hard copy) instantly during their admission reporting time. Out of about 210 students of newly enrolled, 186 students had responded; they are as follows: 139 Design (20 male and 119 female) under-graduates (FD, AD, TD, KD and FC), 26 technology (17 male and 9 female) under-graduates, and 21 (6 male and 15 female) management post-graduates.

The questionnaire comprised of closed ended questions with three different option types of yes or no, multiple choice or ten point scale. Wherever the students had marked more than one option on multiple choices equally divided weightage has been assigned to the all selected options and in final compilation the figures are rounded to nearest integer. The collected data was analyzed using descriptive statistics and compiled in tables or represented by graphs. Care was taken to ensure that wrongly answered questions were eliminated from the statistical analysis of that particular aspect of the study. The figures shown in the parenthesis of all tables are present value.

3. Demographic and course preference factors of students

The demographics of the sampled respondents was collected and presented here to elicit the information. The findings are; the mode (statistical) age of an under graduate student is 18 years and a post-graduate student is 22 years. Almost all students had their medium of instruction in school and college, as English with 86.74 percent of students from urban back ground. Table-1 furnishes the background of the students and table 2 shows gender ratio of students that are admitted. For about 86.6 percent of students these courses are of first priority of study and for the remaining 13.4 percent these are of second priority. Only one UG Design student out of total 186 students stated that she has considered this course as her last choice. 93.5 percent students stated that their parents have been highly interested in fashion studies and only remaining 6.5 percent students stated that their parents have low interest in these courses. From the sample collected it revealed that 25.4 percent of the students of Undergraduate Design program, 0.04 percent the students of Post Graduate Management and zero percent of the students of Undergraduate Technology program have taken special coaching for preparing for the national entrance examination and got admissions into fashion courses.

Table-1: Geographical background of the students absolute number and percentage in parenthesis

Course	Urban	Rural
UG Design	115 (85.82)	19 (14.18)
UG Technology	22 (84.61)	4 (15.38)
PG Management	20 (95.24)	1 (4.76)
All Together	157(86.74)	24 (13.26)

Table-2: Gender ratios of students

Gender	UG Design	UG Technology	PG Management	All together
Male	20 (14.4)	17 (65.4)	6 (28.6)	44 (23.1)
Female	119 (85.6)	9 (34.6)	15 (71.4)	143 (76.9)

4. Fashion background of the students

4.1. Period in their lives at which the Students became aware of fashion courses

With the objective studying, at what points in the academic career the students came to know about these courses, data on three options were collected and the frequency of responses is shown in table-3.

Table 3: When did students come to know about fashion courses

Course	School days	Plus two & college days	Few days before applying
UG Design	99 (71.22)	40 (28.78)	0
UG Technology	16 (61.54)	9 (34.62)	1 (3.85)
PG Management	11 (52.38)	8 (38.10)	2 (9.52)
All together	126 (67.74)	57 (30.65)	3 (1.61)

The study found that most of the students knew about these courses during their school days (67.74 %). It clearly shows that the students identified their career choices and courses they would like to pursue well in their school days itself. The findings concurred with Shumba and Naong (2012), Watson et al. (2010), Barnett (2007), McMahon and Watson (2005), they found students are deciding their career choices long before they come to universities and the choice of subject they made whilst they were already in school. Very specifically, Alloway et al, (2004) identified that many students commenced their career planning during the junior grades in secondary school.

4.2. Information sources for students about fashion courses.

In order to determine from whom the students came to know about these courses; seven options were provided for their responses against each of design and technology undergraduate programs and one postgraduate program, as shown in Table-4.

Table-4: Source of first information about courses

Course	Parents	Relatives	Print Media	Friends	Teachers	Television	Internet
UG Design	28(20.29)	16 (11.59)	18 (13.04)	40 (28.98)	9 (6.52)	1 (0.72)	27 (19.57)
UG Technology	5 (19.23)	3(11.53)	1 (3.85)	12 (46.15)	1 (3.15)	0	4 (15.38)
PG Management	2 (9.52)	5(23.81)	4 (19.04)	5 (23.81)	2 (9.52)	0	3 (14.29)
All together	35 (18.82)	24(12.90)	23 (12.36)	57 (30.64)	12 (6.45)	1(0.53)	34(18.28)

Most of the students come to know about the courses from their friends (30.64%) and very few students come to know from television (0.53%). Similar trends have been seen in both the students enrolled for under-graduate and post-graduate. From the above it is clear that friends, parents and internet in that order are effective medium for providing knowledge on career options.

4.3. Motivation behind students to decide fashion career

In order to study, motivation behind students decision for fashion career five factors; self, parents, friends, relatives and teachers are considered for this study.

Table-5: Motivation for fashion courses

Course	Self	Parents	Friends	Relatives	Teacher
UG Design	72 (51.79)	43 (30.94)	11 (7.91)	6 (4.32)	7 (5.04)
PG Management	14 (66.67)	3 (14.29)	1 (4.76)	2 (9.52)	1 (4.76)
UG Tech	13 (50)	7 (26.92)	2 (7.69)	3 (11.54)	1 (3.85)
All together	99 (53.22)	53 (28.58)	14 (7.53)	11 (5.91)	9 (4.83)

Table-5 shows that self-motivation (53.22%) and motivation by parents (28.58%) are the two major factors which have influenced the students to join fashion courses. The same trend had been seen across all the courses. These results concur from those of Edwards and Quinter (2011) and Perrone, et al., (2001) who found that students own interests as well motivation from parents provide for their career choices. These results differed with Arudo (2008) who reported that the peer pressure also as a major factor that influenced career choice. Edwards and Quinter (2011) found in his studies that family members are more influential in student's career choices as compared to other persons. In a study Shumba and Naong (2012) have found that the family, ability of the student to identify preferred career choice and teachers are the three major factors influencing career choice of the learners. The above Table-5 clearly indicates that self-motivation and that of parent's contribute to career choices of the student and below Table-6 indicates that most of the students that prefer fashion programs had good acquaintance about the field.

Table-6: Fashion professional in family or acquaintances

Course	In family	Acquaintances
UG Design	18/137 (13.14)	53/136 (38.97)
UG Technology	6/26 (23.08)	10/23 (43.48)
PG Management	7/21 (33.33)	15/21 (71.43)
All together	31/184 (16.85)	78/180 (43.33)

4.4. No. of attempts made by the student to secure admission

The below table furnishes, the number of attempts the students make to get admission into fashion courses

Table-7: Number of attempts

Course	1 st	2 nd	3 rd	4 th
UG Design	116 (83.45)	19 (13.67)	0	4 (2.88)
UG Technology	19 (73.1)	7 (26.9)	0	0
PG Management	18 (85.71)	3 (14.29)	0	0
All together	153 (82.26)	29 (15.59)	0	4 (2.15)

From the above table it indicates that 82.26% of students have cleared the entrance exam in the first attempt and 15.59% of the students are in the second attempt. Surprisingly there were 2.15% of the students successful in the fourth attempt. It shows that the students prefer to pursue a fashion program from NIFT irrespective of their success in the first attempt. Similar trends were seen across the courses.

4.5. Parental educational qualification influence on child career decision

Parental educational attainment was positively related to academic involvement and is an important aspect that influences educational aspirations of children.

Table-8: Father's qualification

Course	PhD	PG	UG	HSC (10+2)	SSC (10 th)	School dropout
UG Design	6 (4.58)	36 (27.48)	68 (51.91)	11 (8.34)	5 (3.82)	5 (3.82)
UG Technology	0	7 (26.92)	14 (53.85)	5 (19.23)	0	0
PG Management	0	5 (23.81)	10 (47.62)	1 (4.67)	4 (19.05)	1 (4.67)
All together	6 (3.37)	48 (26.97)	92 (51.69)	17 (9.55)	9 (5.06)	6 (3.37)

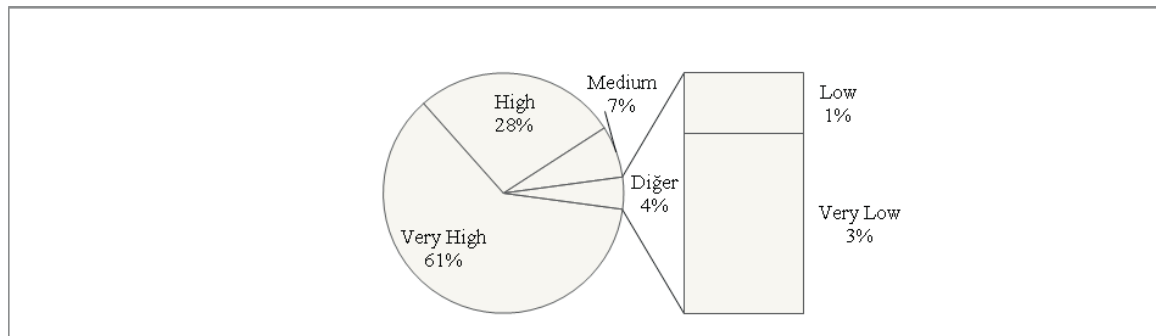
Table-9: Mother's qualification

Course	PhD	PG	UG	HSC (10+2)	SSC (10 th)	School dropout
UG Design	7 (5.04)	35 (25.18)	62 (44.60)	20 (14.39)	10 (7.19)	5 (3.60)
UG Technology	1 (3.70)	7 (25.93)	7 (25.93)	5 (18.52)	6 (27.00)	1 (3.70)
PG Management	1 (4.76)	2 (9.52)	10 (47.62)	4 (19.05)	4 (19.05)	0
All together	9 (4.81)	44 (23.53)	79 (42.25)	29 (15.51)	30 (16.04)	6 (3.21)

The above two tables viz; table-8 and table-9 show that about 70 percent of the student's parents are graduates or are better qualified (UG, PG or PhD). According to Mudhovozi and Chireshe (2012) parents' level of education have influenced career decisions among students.

4.6. Parent's inclination for fashion courses

The interest of parents on fashion course for their children has been collected on a 10 point scale.



Graph-1: Interest of parents on fashion courses as career option for their child

The scales are indicative of the interests as follows: Very high interest (10-9 scale points), High interest (8-7 scale points), Medium interest (6-5 scale points), Low interest (4-3 points) and Very low interest (2-1). The above percentage pie Graph-1 shows the compiled information.

5. Aspiration of the students

5.1. Occupational aspirations

In order to understand about the future career aspirations of the students and what they intend to do after graduation studies. The results obtained are given below.

Table-10: Future career occupation aspirations absolute number and percentage in parenthesis

Course	Own business	Job	Freelance	Teaching	Consultancy	Any other
UG Design	85 (61.15)	17 (12.23)	18 (12.95)	2 (1.44)	3 (2.16)	14(10.07)
UG Technology	13 (50.00)	9 (34.62)	3 (11.54)	0	0	1 (3.85)
PG Management	11 (52.38)	6 (28.57)	3 (14.29)	0	1 (4.76)	0
All Together	109 (58.60)	32 (17.20)	24 (12.90)	2 (1.08)	4 (2.15)	15 (8.06)

After completion of the graduation program the students find many kinds of opportunities in their respective fields like: join a company as employee, start his own business, become an academician, work as a freelancer, work as consultant or as an expert advisor. The above table-10 indicates that most of the students who take up fashion courses are inclined towards starting their own business.

5.2. Extra-curricular interests of students

According to Martin (2013) greater participation in extra-curricular activities was used as a means to provide valuable career transition and to develop professional habits like life-long learning. The importance of extra circular activities was published by Stevenson (2011) who says majority of students irrespective of age believe that the inclusion of extra-curricular activities on application forms/CVs is more important than the actual degree they gain in order to secure employment.

Table-11: Interest in extracurricular activities

Course	Sports	Games	Environment	Culture	Literature	All activities
UG design	21 (15.11)	23 (16.55)	17 (12.23)	43 (30.94)	22 (15.83)	13 (9.35)
UG technology	9 (36.00)	6 (24.00)	1 (4.00)	5 (20.00)	0	4 (16.00)
PG management	7 (33.33)	3 (14.29)	3 (14.29)	6 (28.57)	1 (4.76)	1(4.76)
All together	47 (25.29)	32 (17.20)	21 (11.29)	54 (29.03)	23 (12.37)	18 (9.68)

The above table-11 indicates that the students exhibited interests in extracurricular like cultural activities, sports and games.

5.3. Aspiration for national and international relocation

The compiled findings of Table-12 are in order to study the aspirations of students in National and International relocation to pursue their career

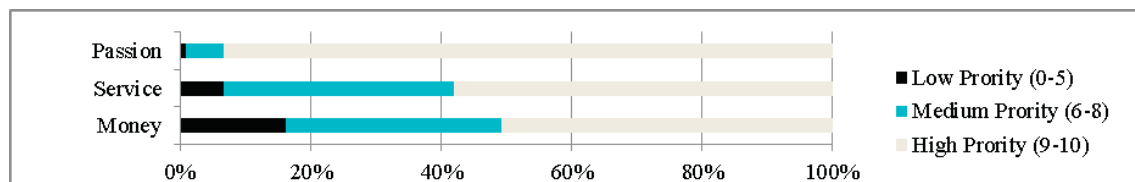
Table-12: Where students want to settle after completion of the course

Course	India	Overseas
UG Design	71 (51.08)	68 (48.92)
UG Technology	13 (50.00)	13 (50.00)
PG Management	14 (66.67)	7 (33.33)
All Together	98 (52.69)	88 (47.31)

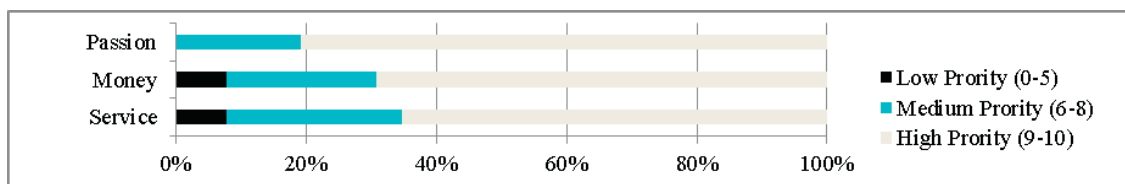
As far as the work location is concerned 53% of students would like to work in India while 47 % of them would like to work overseas after completion of their work. This is explicit from the table-12 given above.

5.4. Priority of purpose for choosing fashion courses

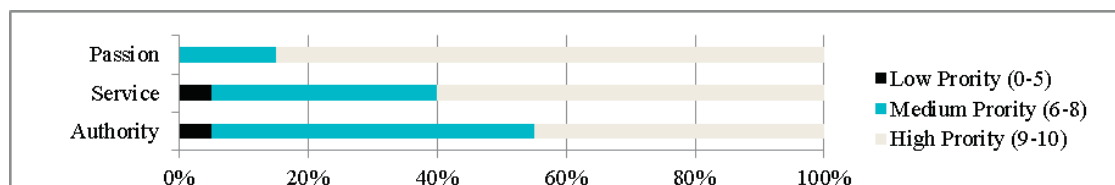
In a ten point scale option the data on the actual purpose for opting for the fashion course was gathered from the students. Five purposes were considered for the study; they are Fame, Money, Authority, Service and Passion. The priorities translated onto the ten point scale are as follows: low priority (0-5 points), medium priority (6-8 points) and high priority (9-10 points). The following graphs; graph-2 to graph-4 show the top three priority options of Design, Technology and Management students respectively in percentage.



Graph-2: Priority of purpose for opting fashion courses (UGD students)



Graph-3: Priority of purpose for opting fashion courses (UGT students)



Graph-4: Priority of purpose for opting fashion courses (PGM students)

It has become evident within the above analysis that students entering fashion education are generally motivated by a passion to learn about the subject and develop their creative abilities

6. Conclusions and discussion

The data pertaining to background, motivation and professional aspiration was collected to study the dominant factors. From the motivation stand point, the students own motivation was the main determinant, while on the parental back ground educated parents contributed to careers of their ward and most of the students were enabled by friends and electronic media (internet) for career choice. The design and management courses were preferred by female students, while the technology courses were sought after by male students. It is interesting to find that most of the students were keen in extra-curricular activities along with their interests in fashion courses. Most of the students have taken up fashion studies with the objective fulfilling their passions while many of them were keen on earnings but a few on glamour. The findings also revealed that the majority of the students demonstrated entrepreneurial interests and most of them had a background with English as the medium of instruction.

Students perceive and decide future career mostly during their higher secondary school days (i.e. VIII to X standard), not just at the entry in college education for their higher secondary education (12 year schooling). Therefore exposure to fashion awareness courses like seminars, counselling, art/creativity competitions to the students during the schooldays influence better and are more fitting. They can be organized by fashion colleges in coordination with schools. Awareness among the school students can be brought by publishing fashion education and career related articles in school magazines, conducting periodic open day sessions to school students where high school students can visit fashion colleges, and summer/ weekend/ holiday camps. It is effective to introduce fashion related subjects in the curriculum at the school level. It is to be propagated that fashion is not just restricted to apparel and ramp walks.

It is found that mostly urban students are pursuing these courses, as the main skills required to become successful in these career pursuits are creativity, sketching, presentation, spontaneity and good communication with prolonged working hours. Except for the communication skills the rural students possess the remaining skills to a large extent. Thus by encouraging and supporting rural students good fashion professionals can be evolved because of their innate skills which suit to fashion programs. Industrialization and post industrialization has made it possible for a common person to be richer as long as she or he has necessary skills and knowledge (Wattles, 2009).

After parents; teachers occupy the second position in terms of nurturing, grooming, guiding and encouraging students. This is due to the fact that they are very closely associated and know the abilities of the students in terms of knowledge, skills and attitude. However, it was found from the study that the teachers play a very minor role towards recognizing, motivating and suitably guiding the students for a fashion career. This may be because of ignorance of the teachers about fashion courses. This shows a need of fashion awareness courses for teachers, which

may be planned during teacher the training programmes, like B.Ed. or M.Ed. Students should have wide range of career information related to Fashion and Design so that they can be able to explore before making their career choices at school level.

Most of the students aspire to start their own business as professional career after graduation. In any educational institution providing placements to passing out students is an important and critical but a challenging task. The demand or popularity of any course mainly depends on the placements historically. On the other hand some vocational courses including the ones in the fashion domain give an opportunity for graduates to start their own business with optimal resources and investment; it means rather looking for an employment opportunity these graduates can in turn offer employment to others. To successfully fulfil this social cause of the students required emphasis and orientation should be given towards entrepreneurship during the education process. Therefore the curriculum should include; improving managerial capabilities, soft skills, collaboration /networking with similar institutions. Internships in such areas with theoretical inputs and live projects opportunities are also important.

In vocational courses the context and deliverance of the curriculum is mainly dependent on the assignments and the back ground of the faculty delivering the subject. Therefore the institutions should orient and train the faculty keeping in view the student's aspirations and background and ensure curriculum deliverance in the appropriate context.

One key findings of the study is that more than 15 percent of the students get through the entrance in the second attempt preparing for one whole academic year. The reasons for this can be further explored and the required awareness & know-how for succeeding in the entrance examination in the first attempt can be determined and provided.

For the overall development of the student extra-curricular activities plays a very important role, as the students are interested in cultural, sports and games in that order. Hence emphasis should be given for these also along with the regular curriculum.

The study conducted based on the data collected clearly reveal that there are excellent prospects in fashion and design as career options. With the provision of awareness and revamping of the curriculum in the early stages of school education more number of students can be drawn into the careers in fashion. This also calls for refining the teaching methods and changing mind sets of parents, teachers and students about fashion education.

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